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SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSES MINORITY QUOTAS
FOR PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

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¶1. (U) On November 2, the Council of Representatives (CoR) passed an amendment to Article 50 of the Provincial Elections Law. The amendment specifies quotas for seats in the Provincial Councils of three provinces for several minority groups. The vote came after lengthy committee deliberations that delayed the opening of the CoR session by more than two hours.

¶2. (SBU) Debate in the first two readings had been based on a UN-proposed text that would have provided the following set-asides for minorities:

Baghdad: three seats for Christians, one seat for Sabeans;
Nineva: three seats for Christians, three seats for Yezidis,
one seat for Shabaks;
Basrah: one seat for Christians

¶3. (SBU) Although agreement on this proposal had earlier been reached in committee, second-reading debate revealed a rift between Kurds, who supported the UN text unchanged, and Shia, who preferred fewer seats for Christians.

¶4. (SBU) In any event, the CoR was invited to vote on three separate options, differing only in the number of seats set aside for Christians in Baghdad and Nineva (three, two or one) and for Yezidis in Nineva (three, two or one). The option with one Christian and Yezidi was carried by a large margin (more than 100 of 150 members present); the original UN text garnered around 50 votes; and the "compromise," two-seat option attracted a handful of votes (a small number of members apparently voted more than once).

¶5. (U) The approved option thus has the following minority quotas:

Baghdad: one seat for Christians, one for Sabeans;
Nineva: one seat for Christians, one seat for Yezidis, one seat for Shabaks;
Basrah: one seat for Christians

¶6. (SBU) After the amendment had passed, Christian member Yonadam Kanna rose to protest the result. He was not joined by other members, however, who quickly filed out of the chamber to begin a one-week recess.

¶7. (U) The amendment will now have to be approved by Iraq's Presidency Council and published in the official gazette before it becomes law.

CROCKER